

Waseda Institute of Social and Human Capital Studies (WISH)

Social Innovation Academy

Durable Social Innovation Alliance (DSIA)

September 7, 2017, 13:00–14:30

Waseda Campus, Building 9, Room #558

Social Innovation Seminar

“Impact of the non-monetary economy and the future of a new social economy: Turning urban WASTAGE into rural RESOURCES!”

By Mr. Anshu Gupta, Founder and CEO, Goonj, India



Professor Mikiko Shimaoka (Shimaoka): Welcome to the Social Innovation Seminar, sponsored by the Waseda Institute of Social and Human Capital Studies (WISH) and jointly organized by the Durable Social Innovation Alliance. My name is Mikiko Shimaoka; I am an associate professor at the Center for Research Strategy, Waseda University, and a researcher at WISH. I will be serving as the moderator today. Welcome to the Social Innovation Seminar! You’ll be hearing a presentation from Mr. Anshu Gupta on this very timely topic. Before his presentation, I would like to invite Professor Haruko Noguchi, the director of WISH, to make the opening remarks.



Professor Haruko Noguchi (Noguchi): Thank you, Dr. Shimaoka. I have been given 10 minutes, but my remarks may be around eight minutes. On behalf of the Waseda Institute of Social and Human Capital Studies, or WISH Research Institute, and the Durable Social Innovation Alliance—, we welcome today’s distinguished guests, Mr. Anshu Gupta and Mr. Shahani. I would like to introduce Mr. Gupta by

spending the next several minutes explaining the importance of his speech.

Mr. Gupta, popularly known as the “clothing man” in India, founded an Indian-based nonprofit, Goonj, in 1998, after he studied mass communication as an undergrad and obtained a master’s degree in economics in graduate school. Goonj is a well-known nonprofit organization with a unique development model, including “Cloth for Work” and “Not Just a Piece of Cloth.” Every year, Goonj conducts more than 3,000 development projects for India’s rural infrastructure. In India and in South Asian countries, Goonj helps secure water sources, repair roads, and build bamboo bridges. In the event of a natural disaster, Goonj’s model involves people in rural communities; residents engage in emergency support activities and reconstruction projects by themselves. Goonj offers clothes in consideration for residents’ activities. Not surprisingly, Goonj’s activities are highly evaluated not only in India, but throughout the world. In 2015, Mr. Gupta was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award, known as the Asian Nobel Prize. Further, he was selected as a fellow for the Schwab Foundation and Ashoka. Additionally, he has been introduced as a leading global social entrepreneur in India in *Forbes Magazine*.

We also appreciate Dr. Mikiko Shimaoka, an associate professor at Waseda University and a colleague in collaborative research at the WISH Research Institute. I would like provide some details about our institute and explain why Mr. Gupta’s speech today will be particularly meaningful for us.

With the population’s rapidly declining birth rate, the refugee situation has been getting worse in Europe and the United States, and immigrants have been viewed as a labor force. In most OECD countries, the poverty rate among children is higher than that of society, and it is increasing. Since the latter half of the 20th century, the slowdown in economic growth in developed regions has spurred a dramatic change in demographic dynamics and the sustainability of public assistance and cooperation functions that have been enriched under the paternalism of the nation. Currently, these various factors cause poverty and inequality, which impede the accumulation of human capital and cause conflicts among people and negative changes beyond individuals and their generation. Social unrest is a common problem globally in the 21st century. Therefore, at the WISH Research Institute—our institute—, how human capital, represented by education and health, is accumulated and its relevance to socioeconomic status is examined through the utilization of quantitative and qualitative big data, feed services, and experiments on how the mechanism is inherited beyond individuals and generations. We conduct verification of empirical and theoretical works to test various hypotheses, including scientific hypotheses, and we focus on the relationship between socioeconomic status, social capital, and human capital.

WISH draws attention to an urgent policy issue that the international community must face; it involves medium- and long-term tasks indispensable for sustainability of the social system for humans. Since there is a significant correlation among socioeconomic status and human capital because of recent research, a consensus is generally obtained among researchers. However, we still have not achieved a firm conclusion to the question about the various factors correlated with human capital and the corresponding mechanism and significance of their influence. Neither theoretical nor empirical results have been obtained yet. In addition, though the conventional human capital theory clarifies the accumulation of human capital by an individual, we do not know yet how human capital accumulated by an individual exceeds the individual or how it is transmitted across generations, communities, and society. That means previous studies have not given sufficient answers to the question regarding whether human capital could be inherited as social capital and contribute to accumulation of the latter. There is a strong possibility that human capital has external effects; therefore, its accumulation is likely to be too small. If the accumulation of human capital is restricted to an individual, the disparity between those who can efficiently accumulate it and those who cannot will be expanding. This situation might be one of the major causes of social unrest and conflict in modern societies.

Based on this awareness, WISH will be working on concrete subjects such as medical care, nursing care, education, the environment, and development. It aims to find the key to the two-way door from the accumulation of human capital to social capital and vice versa. Thus, Mr. Gupta's activities through Goonj give us good lessons about how an individual's human capital could contribute to the accumulation of social capital in the community and how it will transfer to future generations. We are glad and honored to have Mr. Gupta today at Waseda University. Mr. Gupta, we are looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much.

Shimaoka: Now, we would like to move on to the presentation. Please welcome Mr. Anshu Gupta, Founder and CEO of Goonj, India.

Mr. Anshu Gupta (Gupta): Thank you, *namaskar*, and good afternoon. I know my friend is here to translate. I will try to speak slowly. If the translation is not needed and my English is okay, then maybe we will get more time to talk. Otherwise, we will pause after a few minutes.



I come from India. My stories are Indian, but they are not limited to India. When I talk about poverty or problems, let's understand that half the world is exactly the same. I will talk about India because

that's my workplace; it's where I was born and where I grew up. We find in our work that half the world is the same, and these stories are the same. Problems are the same. Solutions are also the same. Just as with geography, the economy, and political systems, we need to create a debate. Moreover, we need to change the debate.



Gupta: So it's been work—and for me, personally—to speak with such senior people, including many professors and researchers. It's a totally different crowd today; I must accept that I am going through personally a very complicated phase. We started very small, with about 67 units of clothing. Today, we are

dealing with more than three million units of material. We have 12 large offices and almost 900 people in the organization. We have the best possible recognition. However, this is my argument: if I put my hand here before sleeping and ask to see those hundred faces or hundred people in villages where their lives have changed completely because of us, the honest answer is very tough. Furthermore, when we go to these seminars and conferences and find that every single institution or individual is claiming that 100,000 lives have been changed, I must ask that if everyone is changing 100,000 lives, why is change is not happening? Why has poverty not been reduced? Why has migration not declined? Why are the problems not solved? There is something fundamentally wrong, and it could be the way we are thinking about things. That's my personal theory.

Gupta: In my opinion, for the next few years, we should stop working as we have been. We must challenge ourselves to consider how we have been thinking. We should start looking at things not from our own lenses, but from the lenses of the people for whom we are trying to work. There must be a fundamental, systematic—maybe abrupt—change in the way we are operating. I mean, that's how we feel. I will share the stories of non-issues today. I call them non-issues because you have already studied them: education, water, sanitation, and old age. These are issues all of us know about. Personally, I feel that there are hundreds of non-issues in this world bothering people much more than the issues.

Gupta: Today, I will share a story about clothing. Okay? It is a non-issue. Years ago, we asked a very basic question. We said that you talk about three basic needs of humankind: food, clothing, and shelter. Now I know that there is a Japanese saying referring to food, clothing, and home. Food is a common subject. It is an issue. Shelter is a common issue. A lot of people work to provide it, as do

governments. What about clothing? Why is it that such a basic need, which is so important for me and you, has become disaster relief material? Remember the tsunami? Do you remember any of the disaster efforts across the globe? The first thing that comes as relief material is secondhand clothing. Why has clothing something charitable that you give when you have it and when you don't need it? If an earthquake is a disaster, and if a flood is a disaster, why are winters not disasters? We have found that more people are dying from a lack of clothing in winters than in earthquakes or floods.

Gupta: So, that story

is just one among
many that have
triggered my
contemplations. This
is like 1991. I was
still working in
journalism and
roaming around the
world. Suddenly, I
saw this picture. The



The Non Issue

words on the wagon indicate that it is used to pick up unclaimed, abandoned, dead bodies. Every large city across the globe has a very large number of homeless people. They go through a very miserable phase before they settle down in the slums. Many of them die from hunger and a lack of attention, medicine, and clothing. They often do not survive cold winters. Habib, this person who is no more, and his blind wife, Amna Begum, used to go and pick up dead bodies and bring them to the. For every dead body, they were paid 20 rupees, which is equivalent to about 30 to 35 yen This was a full-time job. I'm saying again that the story is coming from India, but let us not forget that even the city of in the most so-called developed nation, has about 45,000 homeless people. Let's think about the global homeless population.

For every dead body. this is what they were getting, and this was their only profession. I spent about a week with them. They would head out in the early morning because it was at that time they would get more news of bodies. I would be there with them in the evenings.

Gupta: When I started writing, two statements came from the family. Habib said, "In winters, my work goes up. Many times, I have so much work that I cannot handle it." I found that every 24 hours in the range of 45 kilometers where they were able to go, they used to pick up 10 to 20 bodies. In the summers, the average was four or five. Habib had a little daughter—that's my daughter. I'm the

same age. The most shocking statement from her was, “When I feel cold, I hug the dead body and sleep.” She also said, “It does not trouble me. It does not turn around.” I couldn’t understand because I always thought that dead bodies were cold, but perhaps I was not clear about the meaning of composition. It took years for me to understand that. I also realized that maybe the cold doesn’t kill people because if it did, I would have died. By the grace of the Lord, I survived; however, someone else died. It is not the cold. It is the lack of clothing. Such deaths and suffering are highly preventable; they are non-issues.



Cloth For Work

Turning age-old charitable act into dignified giving!!

Gupta: So, about six or seven years after this incident and many others like it, I stopped working as a corporate person and truly started working. Two things before I move on to this set of pictures and the so-called enterprise model and innovation—these are the two most important things.

One is that we wanted to make clothing a subject when talking about development issues, from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals to any kind of planning across the globe by anyone, whether it be government agencies, universities, or anyone else. There are 100 to 150 issues, from domestic violence to global warming, but you will never find clothing cited as a development subject. This is a huge gap. We said we wanted to make it an issue. I can survive without food. I mean, don’t give me breakfast and lunch; I can still come and talk. Ask me to drop every single piece of clothing, and I would not be here, even for one minute. If something is that important for you and me, why is not a development subject? It is the first visible sign of poverty; determinations regarding whether someone is poor are not made based on education or culture or behavior, but on the basis of what the person is wearing, unfortunately. That’s the first visible sign of poverty. Why do we ignore that? That is one thing.

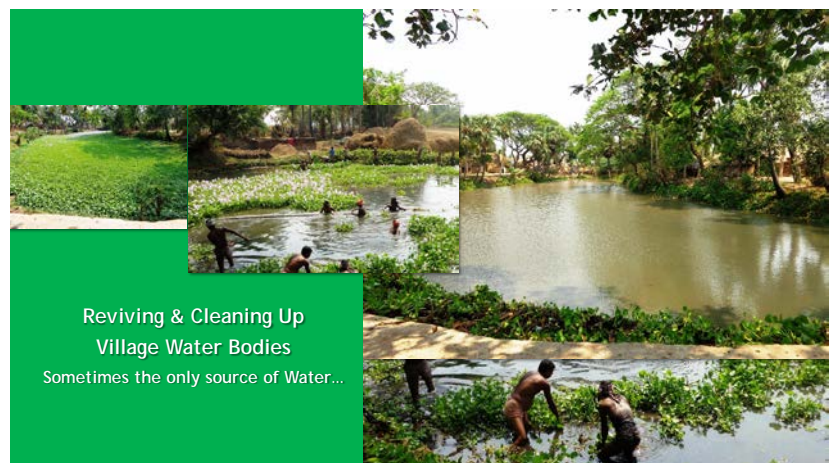
The second most important thing is how we respond when someone says, “I want to donate clothing.” We will object, and we will correct. We will tell people that they do not donate; they discard something they don’t use that is of no use to them. Let’s stop calling it a donation and start becoming grateful to the people who are using our secondhand materials and are giving them a second life.

Gupta: Regarding the second most important thing, we need to change the thought process as it pertains to charitable work; for village people across the globe, their biggest asset is their self-respect, their dignity. You do not find beggars in villages. Begging is a city phenomenon. Somehow, we really need to challenge the entire concept of charity because I do not know any place in the world where charity is sustained for development. The most dignified people on this earth are the poorest people; they are only financially poor. That's why we have collected such a large amount of material. We started with six or seven units of personal clothing. Today, as I said, we deal with 3,000 tons of cloth, and so we can support anything and everything. We do not distribute because, for us, dignity matters. That's how this entire concept of Cloth for Work came about. People take up their own initiatives... non-initiatives. I can show you some pictures that show how we operate. People are paid, which gives them dignity; they are rewarded with secondhand goods. They do not receive such goods as charity because—I wish to emphasize this—for millions of people in this world, dignity matters.

Gupta: Just to give you an idea of the kind of work we are doing across the country, we now engage in about 3,000 significant activities. The model is that people will choose a problem. It is not a top-down thing. It is not government agencies saying that every village will have a road. It is the people of the village who decide whether they need a road, a clean pond, bridges, schools, or something else. They work on it for a few days and are rewarded with a family kit, which we create out of collected clothing. In other parts of the globe, clothing has traditionally been used as a form of charity, as a good or handout.

We use it as currency for development. Now, let's look at some pictures.

Gupta: So, this is just one to give you a glimpse of how it used to be. This is how people were, and this is what it is.





Gupta: There are no machines for such a remote place. India has 600,000 villages. They are remote. Because of the geography, natural disasters, and tough terrain, it is not possible to reach these villages with machines. Therefore, we need to bring back traditional wisdom and strength. The village people used to operate

earlier, and they were much happier.

Gupta: We are absolutely doing the traditional thing. Here, you see clean air; this is the sari, where people are entering the river. This is all they have. Look at this. I want to give you just a glimpse of the tribal way. There was no possibility for a road as the location is so remote. You can see how people used to journey. One thing that we work on is anything that is a leftover of a government project; if it is an unfinished project, we take it up. That's how we obtained this piece of pipe. It required 100% manual labor. Local wisdom. Local equipment. Local problem.

Locals from many villages got together to make a 2 km road



The success ..



Local solution. People from five villages got together and this is what they created.

Gupta: In India, the wells are drying up, and the water level is going down because we are becoming dependent on hand pumps. But—you know, the taps—whenever drought happens, which we suffered last year... half of our country, we are going back and digging the well. So, in our work, we are just bringing back the tradition of creating wells in the villages so that every village has at least one secure water body. Seventy percent is agriculture. Seventy percent are villages, and the biggest employer of people is agriculture. If there is no water, there is no agriculture. There's no employment and a huge amount of migration. Regarding migration in India, the main reason for migration is actually—you know what people say—the attraction of the city, but that is crap. That's just not true. The primary reason in India is water. Simple. This is unfortunate, but in the last several decades, we have not been able to focus and work on water in our villages. Without water, there is no agriculture. Consequently, without agriculture, there is no employment—just migration. It's a forced migration. It is not a migration by choice. It's a migration by compulsion.



Digging up wells in water parched areas with the power of people

Gupta: This is what I want to emphasize. Though this is an Indian story, it is applicable to the entire world. Water is an issue worldwide. Drinking water is an issue, but we hardly talk about the water needed for agriculture. And at the end of the day, for all of us, what matters most is water

for the agriculture. Drinking water will come automatically. It will be solved sooner or later if you have enough water for agriculture, but we are only focusing on the drinking water. Drinking water cannot save employment. Drinking water cannot stop migration. Water for agriculture can stop migration and secure employment. That's why I call it a non-issue so far.

Gupta: So, this is how people work. You see, I mean, this was 100% built by them. This is the most important slide for conveying to you the concept. I will not explain the 3,000 different varieties of work. When we see photographs like these, we call the people depicted laborers, villagers, unskilled, or unemployed. Beautiful words have been prefaced with “un” because that's how we define such people. In our model, they are the biggest givers. We don't use the word “beneficiary.” We also don't use the word “donor.” We call everyone a stakeholder. In this model, people shown here are the

biggest givers because for this entire work, they are giving back in a big way in a new currency called labor. They are paid. This is what people get for their work. They are paid in a new currency called material. It represents the genesis of a parallel economy or non-academic economy. When we were chosen by NASA as one of the game-changers in innovation a few years back, this beautiful concept emerged: the genesis of a parallel economy that is not only cash-based but also trash-based. It is the revival of a traditional word; in India, we used to call it Shambhala, referring to community labor. It is the revival of the traditional barter economy with two new currencies: labor and material. Money, which is often the only currency in our view, is only for the logistics effect. Material and labor are larger currencies. There are no givers and no beneficiaries; everyone is a stakeholder.

Gupta: Speaking roughly about figures, if we spend about three million dollars in our work, we earn about seven or eight million dollars' worth of material and about three or four million dollars' worth of labor. When you spend 10 million dollars and you start valuing labor and material as currency, your company's working capital becomes 12 million dollars. Thus, we've been able to complete complex infrastructure projects because we value labor and material as currency. Shall I repeat or is it okay?

Gupta: Another example: just mangroves and a very big lake. Approximately 100,000 square meters of a beautiful lake in the city of Srinagar were chosen for clean-up by 160 to 300 people as a part of this initiative called Cloth for Work. The biggest impact of this particular activity was not only that people assumed ownership of the concept and the area, but they also—indirectly and directly—put a lot of pressure on the local government to perform. When citizens take something into their own hands, the government has no other recourse but to perform because they owe it to the citizens.



Mangroves; Conserving the ecology of Sunder bans



"If we continue to organize such events, the old beauty of Dal Lake will be restored and the polluted Dal will become free from different polluted materials". - says Ghulam Ahmad, a resident and participant.

Gupta: Dal Lake in Kashmir is huge. If time permits, I have a one-minute video clip on this work. It will help you understand how the process works. Now, two or three more things and we will open entertain discussions. We are forging new paths across the globe; at the same time, disaster relief and rehabilitation work is taking place. In this modern era, everything is changing—the way we are communicating, for example, with laptops and mobile devices. It seems that everything is changing except for disaster relief and rehabilitation processes throughout the world; the theories and implementation

methods are almost the same. We still create the same kind of fabrics. People still think that creating a wall is going to stop a tsunami when an earthquake occurs. I'm tired of these same approaches because India is a disaster-prone country. We have not been able to (and maybe we cannot), work on the relief or rehabilitation measures in a different way. For us, even disaster relief and rehabilitation work are related to Cloth for Work, and we see why the community cannot give back. Disaster brings much destruction. By the time the government formulates its response schemes, time has elapsed. In our approach, just after a week, people start creating new roads and bridges and cleaning up existing roads. Then, we ensure their dignity; they receive material as currency. This reverse approach means that the relief material is not relief or charity. Relief work becomes dignified in a big way.

Gupta: Two more concepts...

One involves education because I strongly feel that children, unfortunately, have become the biggest victims of charity throughout the world. If you want to become Miss India, Miss Japan, or Miss World, one thing you have to talk about from the stage is work. It has become such a charitable thing. What we did and what we are doing involve reversing certain approaches in education. We are saying that fine kids should get things free. Can we really work on etiquette and discipline, whether a kid takes baths, or if a child is on time? A child is rewarded with good

behavior with school materials collected—notebooks, pencils, school bags, shoes, everything. What will happen? From childhood, a young person will not become a victim of charity because his or her

self-respect will remain intact.

No one will have the right to just give a child something.

Every child is improving, working on himself or herself, with expectations of rewards.

The basic school concept is a concept of reward. For their own good actions or behavior, kids are rewarded with school material. In a very beautiful children's center, we supplied

toys to be used as rewards. A lady who works there said that earlier, the kids were not coming. Now

Disaster- Using all the possible local resources..



Dignifying Relief..



School to School: *Turning under utilised school material into a motivational tool !!*



they are. That's just a small thing that makes a big difference. You want to translate?



Gupta: My last non-issue for today is very alarming, and it's a taboo subject. Literate people—educated people—do not want to talk about it. We asked a very basic question. We said that every single woman or girl needs a piece of cloth, which is now called a sanitary pad or sanitary towel. There are different names in different countries for those

five days every month during which every woman has a real need for sanitary provisions. However, it's a very taboo subject. You just don't want to talk about it, even when you go to the market and buy the best possible product. In my country and in many, many other countries, it is always wrapped in black polythene packaging or in a newspaper because there is a culture of shame and silence. We asked a very basic question. We said that if you do not have enough to wear in terms of clothing, what do you use? You can imagine in 2004 or 2005, if you would have gone on Google like me and typed "sanitary pad," "sanitary napkin," or "sanitary towel," the best possible tampons and cups would appear as available products. Yet, half of the world's women cannot research such products in this way. It has not been a problem in my country or neighboring countries, yet we have had no solutions to help women in a large part of Africa and poorer parts of the world.

Gupta: When we didn't find any evidence of a solution to the problem, we started cutting cloth in India and Nepal and many other countries. I'm angry because the world talks about women's empowerment, women's education, and women's health. However, I looked at how things really were. Women were using the dirtiest pieces of cloth for what was, for them, a synonym of dirt. In this case, cloth must be washed, but because of the stigma, a woman cannot dry it in sunlight. Washing is a problem because life depends on public taps. Public taps are always in public places. If you do not have space to take a bath, how do you wash that piece of cloth? A woman must wear it again, despite the dirt and moisture. We found that in families with two to three women and girls, which is common in slums and villages across the globe, their cycles are different. They share the same piece of cloth. We also found that the same piece of cloth is often shared by neighbors. Then, we found that millions of women and girls in half the world, not only in India, are using sand, wood ash, jute bags, rugs, rags, newspapers, plastic sheets, and used sanitary pads—anything and

everything to stop or absorb a woman's flow is used as a sanitary towel in many parts of the world.

Gupta: It became a very big issue in my personal life when in 2005, I met a family in which a lady used a piece of a blouse seen typically in India, which had a hook. The iron hook rusted and she died of tetanus. That motivated me to explore this problem, and our team traveled extensively, finding that half



of the population does not have proper sanitary material. Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and half of Africa are in worse situations than India. Fortunately, India is still a textile-rich country. You know, we are the exporters. We can still take care of this problem, although it's still pretty bad. Yet, we did nothing. I'm carrying to Tokyo the cloth we have collected, especially cotton. I should have shown you what we are making. Every single piece of cotton and semi-cotton cloth is being converted to solve this problem. We don't even call the resulting product a sanitary pad. We call it a better piece of cloth. It is 100% reusable. The per usage cost is not even a yen—less than that because a lady can use it multiple times. Wherever water is available, it can be washed and reused. Our pads are 100% environmentally friendly because not even a single inch of plastic is being used. In the last few years, we have created about four million such pads, which is equal to almost 10, 20, 30 million pads. Every single pad is created out of the wastage of cities. Waste cloth that otherwise would have gone to landfill sites is now being to make sanitary pads. Hosiery and T-shirt material is being converted into undergarments for women.

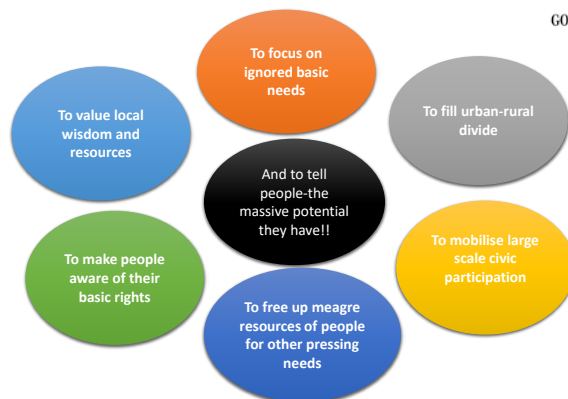


Gupta: What is even smarter is that it's not just a piece of cloth or a sanitary pad; it's a tool to end this culture of human silence and make it a dialogue. We have to make it a subject. As I said, certain non-issues need to become issues. Common sense tells us that if we solve the problem of sanitary pads, other small

educational issues and half of the health-related issues of women will be solved. For example, I always question something we hear regularly: "We are too busy treating malaria; we don't want to treat the mosquitos." I call this a bag of mosquitos. If you kill the mosquito—if you solve the problem—, maybe malaria will not spread. I think that's why I'm saying that the time has come to change the way we have been thinking, because somewhere we need to be honest and say that half the theories are not working. Not much to translate, but please do.

Gupta: I'm not sure how to neatly summarize what I have shared today, but I want us to consider how we are using this tool—old material—as a tool for social change? I have talked about ignoring basic needs. We have a tool for filling up the urban-rural divide. It requires large-scale civic participation. People call

Establishing old material as a tool for social change



गून्ज..
GOONJ.. a voice, an effort

Somewhere the genesis of a parallel economy which is not CASH based but TRASH based !!

it one of the largest civic movements in India right now because of the millions of apartment dwellers and the millions making up the rural population who have joined in the process. It also frees up the media. Each of us can only eat maybe two bowls of rice in a day. Whatever other money we spend on material to take care of our needs is also needed by the so-called rural family with similar material needs. They also need clothes and food. If you take care of those things, you free up their limited financial resources so that they can be used for education, health, and other heart-pressing

issues. There is a larger economy involved. It's not just about collecting and distributing material. People talk about their basic rights. The 100% person values only the local wisdom and local resources. We don't bring in technicians, admissions consultants, or machines from outside because we know that villagers know how much water will come in the month of July or any other month. They can build a much better bridge than people like us, who only go there as visitors. Most importantly, the concept is all about helping people realize that they have great potential and do not have to depend on certain people to wear good clothes. I think the only thing that differentiates me from them is that I wear good clothes. They are skilled and resourceful and can perform more extensive labor than me. They also have traditional wisdom, which I don't have, so they do not have to be dependent on people who wear good clothes. That's it. You want to say it?

Gupta: My last slide ensures that I end on a positive note. I also want to show how the little things, when fully understood from the eyes of the beholder, create change. Therefore, I want your participation in this.

This is a very common sight in the world, especially with the refugee problems and others. Again, it is a very common sight. People who used to own three-bedroom houses somewhere in the country are now roaming around with small bags of material. People who were the richest people in their respective countries are the poorest people in some other country. As people who share the world with these impoverished ones, it bothers us. My role in the next two minutes before I finish is to change some perceptions and showcase how change really occurs. How do we begin looking at things from a different angle? I want you to react to this kid and this picture: what is the first word, thought, or sentence that comes in your mind when you see this child and the given situation?

Gupta: Please, who can react to this? Anyone. Just words...the first word, thought, or sentence that comes to mind. For example, I feel that this boy is hungry. I would like to know what you are feeling now.

— — Freezing (**from audience**)

Cloth matters !!



Gupta: Freezing

— — Cold (**from audience**)

Gupta: Anything else? Can anyone relate to this kid or this situation?

— — Scared (**from audience**)?

Gupta: Scared

Gupta: This is how we see half of the world. This is how so many organizations are unfortunately selling poverty to collect money—by showing these pictures again and again.

Gupta: Please tell me, if you have a reaction to this picture, what is the first word, thought, or sentence that comes to your mind or heart (wherever it comes from)?

— — Naked (**from audience**)

Gupta: Naked

Gupta: Naked, scared, hungry

DIGNITY matters !!



Youth matters !!



— — In need (**from audience**)

Gupta: In need. Anything else?

— — Sad (from audience)

Gupta: Sad. Anything else? Let's just give a minute to this. It's very important. It is very important that how we see the world without a T-shirt.

Gupta: I was in a school yesterday making a similar presentation, and I asked those attending the same questions. They said everything, you know, about the kid. I asked them, "Do you know what you mean by poverty? What do you mean by this?" They said, "Oh, ...world." I said, "What is the difference between you and this person?" They said skill. They said education. They responded with things that are not visible. How do you see education? How do you see a skill? By just seeing a person. How do you see money? How do you see wisdom just by seeing a person? So, I ask a very simple question today: if all of you were sent outside in this condition— naked, hungry, and without the ability to take a bath—, do you think you would be considered the son of a millionaire? Or would you will be treated and seen as a poor person because, unfortunately, cloth is the first visible sign of poverty? Anything else you want to add to this before I move on?

Gupta: So, if I were to talk about this boy and give you 10 minutes to think about what we have discussed, I can guarantee you that every single negative word in our dictionary or vocabulary would come out. We must begin to find positive words to describe young people in similar situations.

Gupta: Is the other boy shivering, helpless, or sad? He might be poor. He is not in need. He is not asking for something. He is not helpless. We want them to react. They say that he doesn't have parents. Imagine. The boy who does not have a T-shirt may not have parents, according to some people. You cannot relate your skill or discipline to this kid. This is confidence.

Gupta: I'm actually asking agencies and governments, "Is it not common sense that it is much easier to take this kid to school than it is to take the other one? It is not much easier to talk about health and education and whatever for this kid rather than for the other one?" It takes years to cultivate confidence in someone. A piece of cloth can do it in minutes.

Gupta: This is another person. You would not even think about sitting with this person and discussing the economy of the village, the past and future of the village, or the development of the village. You would not even ask directions from this person. And you will call him "Uncle." Suddenly, the wisdom will come—I don't know from where—but it's all in the shirt. He is a not the right person to talk about the economy of the village, but he is a very experienced person. You see? It shows on his face. That's how our perception changes. And you know what? If this person was

standing somewhere, I would stand next to him. My way of behaving with people changes, and it's true if I'm not wearing this good tie and jeans. If I'm wearing some dirty shirt or clothing, I can tell you that even the university will not allow me to come inside. That's so. It happens.

Gupta: I thought I would show you my slides also. This is a person you would not even stand next to; you would avoid the place where he is eating. You know, the beard looks so hard here, but it looks so beautiful there.

Gupta: Thank you very much. I have described how secondhand material has become a tool, a currency. We just want to use that tool to change the way people are thinking about issues on which they are working. It's a challenge to ourselves and to the larger world that the time has come to stop the way we are working or change the way we are working. Let's accept that things are not working. Can we just acknowledge a bit of arrogance and bring some humility to the situation by admitting that the world is not suffering only with the issues that I think are the issues, but it is also suffering with some non-issues? Thank you very much.

